

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3076

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 15729

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JA, KS, UR

SUBJECT: SAKHALIN KOREANS AS JAPAN-KOREA BILATERAL ISSUE

REF: A. SEOUL 4224, B. TOKYO 8648, C. MOSCOW 9938,
D. SEOUL 5104, E. TOKYO 15728

1. ON CHANCE THAT USSR WILL ALLOW REPATRIATION TO TOK
JAPAN OF ELDERLY MEMBERS OF KOREAN COMMUNITY STRANDED ON
SAKHALIN AT END OF WORLD WAR II (REFTELS), ROK AND
JAPANESE DIPLOMATS HAVE IN RECENT MONTHS ATTEMPTED TO
AGREE ON HOW REPATRIATES WOULD BE HANDLED ONCE TURNED
OVER TO JAPANESE CONSULAR AUTHORITIES AT NAKHODKA.

2. ON SURFACE, ROK-JAPAN ARGUMENT IS OVER WHICH STATE
SHOULD BEAR THE MAJOR SHARE OF THE COST OF TRANSPORTING
FROM NAKHODKA, AND THEN RESETTLING, ANY SAKHALIN
KOREANS GRANTED PERMISSION TO LEAVE USSR. KOREAN
EMBASSY COUNSELOR KIM EI MYUNG TOLD US IN STRICT
CONFIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT UNDERLYING ISSUE HAS BEEN
GOJ INSISTENCE THAT ROK AGREE TO THE COMPULSORY
ONWARD MOVEMENT TO SOUTH KOREA OF ANY OF THESE
SAKHALIN KOREANS WHO DID NOT HAVE "STRONG TIES" TO
JAPAN. THE ROK HAS ARGUED, WE UNDERSTAND, THAT MEMBERS
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OF GROUP THAT HAS APPLIED FOR EXIT VISAS, NUMBERING

201 PERSONS, ARE ELDERLY AND SIMPLY "WANT TO GO HOME TO DIE." LOGICALLY, NONE WOULD WISH TO REMAIN IN JAPAN.

3. ELABORATING, COUNSELOR KIM EXPLAINED THAT ROK WAS INTENT THAT ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT WITH GOJ FOR SAKHALIN KOREANS IN NO WAY PREJUDICE RIGHTS OF RESIDENT KOREAN COMMUNITY HERE. SPECIFICALLY, ROK HAS MAINTAINED THAT INASMUCH AS KOREANS WERE IN SAKHALIN BECAUSE THEY WERE TRANSPORTED THERE TO LABOR FOR THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL ARMY, JAPAN MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE "PRINCIPLE" THAT REPATRIATES FROM SAKHALIN MAY ELECT TO RESIDE IN JAPAN.

4. FONOFF AND ROK SOURCES HAVE SINCE IMPLIED TO EMBASSY THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME PROGRESS IN RESOLVING BILATERAL ARGUMENT. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT ARGUMENT REMAINS ACADEMIC, INASMUCH AS SOVIETS HAVE YET TO ALLOW ANY OF SAKHALIN KOREANS DESIRING REPATRIATION TO THE ROK TO LEAVE. THE KOREAN EMBASSY AND THE FONOFF APPEAR TO AGREE THAT WERE IT POSSIBLE, UPWARDS OF 7,000 PEOPLE WOULD SEEK TO EMIGRATE TO ROK.
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